

YATA NATO Week 2015

Final Report



YATA – Youth Atlantic Treaty Association
Jeunesse de l'Association du Traité Atlantique

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Executive Summary

The Youth Atlantic Treaty Association was pleased to extend an invitation to all national Chapters to join in the international NATO Week celebration. Acknowledging the need to raise public awareness, while also appreciating the extended efforts of each national YATA chapter, YATA international board started an initiative to showcase to the public the enormous contributions of the Alliance and to further connect young security professionals from national chapters and beyond. This transnational event took place in 12 countries, from the 31st of March until the 4th of April 2015. We esteemed to have engaged more than 1,000 young professionals and students with this initiative. The impact in our social media was very significant as we see the number of followers and page likes increase in all our accounts – Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Youtube. The entire event was funded by national chapters themselves.

YATA NATO Week: Activity Goals

In December 2014, the newly elected YATA Executive Board discussed the possibility of celebrating the Alliance and its contribution to the World order in a single International event, hosted in a country to be defined, on the 4th of April, day of the anniversary of the Alliance. However, considering that date was coincident with Easter time and also having in mind it would be a Saturday, we suggested extending the celebration for one entire week. From the 31st of March till the 4th of April, while the overall format of activities on the national level was very much in a decision to be made by each national chapter, we suggested the chapters to follow some common approaches and integrate this festivity. The primary goals of this activity were clear: try to focus on past relevance and future challenges in front of the Alliance in the light of current crises and beyond; invite relevant prominent speakers from different countries and present the chapter's national contribution to the sustainability and future of NATO, trying to cooperate if possible with the Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Military and Universities; include young people, promote and discuss the relevance of the Alliance for the generations past the Cold War; document the activities in a form of interviews, videos and photos; prepare a publication in their national language and

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English on the topic of NATO and their respective country; use social media such as, but not limited to, Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Youtube; use the hashtag: #NATOweek2015 and #YATANATOWeek; and contribute to online YATA leaders debate among national chapters representatives.

Considering the fact that the event was funded by national chapters themselves, with the above-mentioned goals we were aiming to the following outcome: widespread promotion of common values and goals, recognition of importance of the Alliance and national contributions, reinforcement of international cooperation among young professionals, academic debate; raising awareness of national contribution and expanding the reach of these actions

Furthermore, since one of the priorities of the NATO Week celebration was to connect and foster cooperation among national chapters, the activity we considered the most important of the week was the YATA Leaders Online Debate Session (Google Hangout). The goal of the session was to exchange ideas, opinions and to foster cooperation among leading YATA members. Connected to an online platform created for this purpose by YATA international, the participants had the opportunity to share their own ideas, opinions, initiatives, debate future YATA projects and also report on the implementation of NATO Week, as well as other national activities and future events.

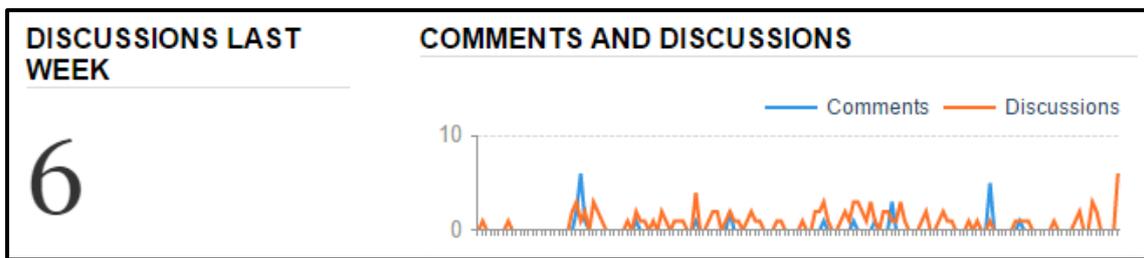
YATA EB Activities – Analysis

Day 1 started with an official communication from YATA President, Francisco Costa, highlighting the reasons why we should celebrate the Alliance. The video had 69 views on Youtube and 14 shares on Facebook.



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After this first moment, we launched the 'Linkedin Discussions', being the following three the topics under discussion - **Collective Defence** (Readiness Action Plan, Defence Spending); **Crisis Management** (Resolute Support Mission, Maritime Security); and **Cooperative Security** (Defence Capacity building, support for Ukraine, NATO-Russia Relations). With a target audience **composed by YATA** LinkedIn Groups Members in a total of 533 members, plus participants from other pages (engaged by our advertisement), this initiative was not as successful as we wished – we only had 6 new discussions and a maximum of 7 comments per topic.

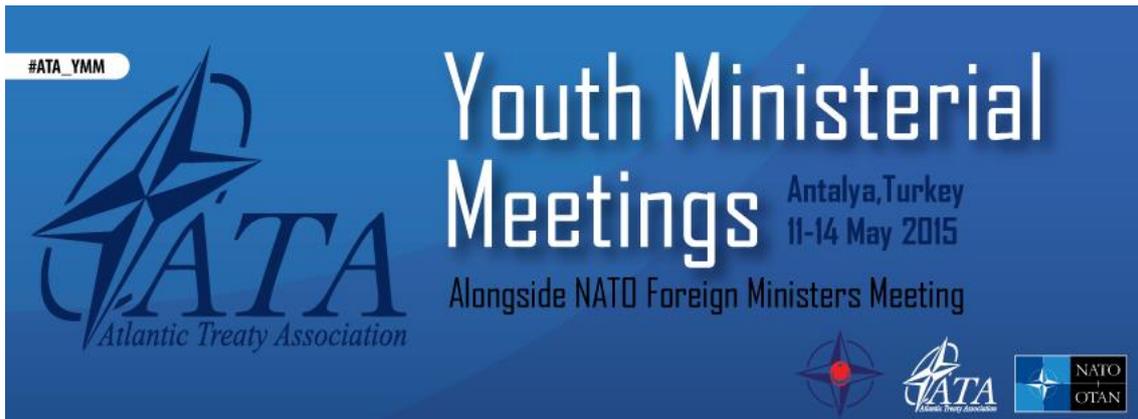


Our last piece of information on the first day was a short address by YATA Secretary-General Blaž Grilj. Blaž attended the panel on 'Peace and Security in Europe' organised by the Euro-Atlantic Council of Slovenia this afternoon in Ljubljana, also being responsible for the live tweet commentary. The video has 205 views (and counting).



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We initiated NATO Week **Day 2** inviting our followers to apply for the Youth Ministerial Meetings in Antalya. The aim of the YMM is to give emerging young professionals an opportunity to learn first-hand what it means to be a world leader. The participants will have the privilege to meet senior diplomats and experts in the field and develop their knowledge and skills by engaging in discussions and workshop with key stakeholders working within the field of security and defense.



Then, we launched our first contest of the week – the *Photo contest*. This competition asked participants – YATA and non-YATA – to capture in their own way, in one photo frame, what they consider to be the essence of security, NATO and defense, and the connection between the three points. Pictures should reflect the participants' own views on what security is. We received 26 pictures. We declared *Tadej Marinic* from Slovenia the winner with the following picture of the Slovenian Military police special operations unit, taken at an exercise he attended with a group of colleagues. He will now be invited to attend the Portuguese Atlantic Youth Seminar.

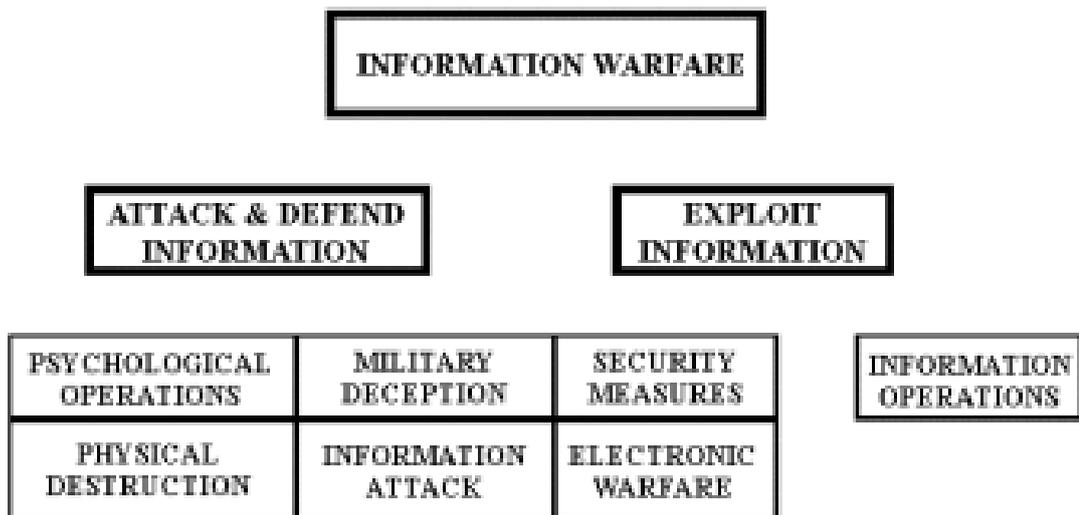


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By the end of the second day, we shared a short video (with 36 views, so far) of YATA VP Eda Guney with a brief statement about this initiative and the impact we were trying to create among, but not limited to, the YATA network.



Day 3 started with the launch of the second contest – essay contest. This competition asked participants – YATA and non-YATA – to elaborate in their own words about one specific topic – “**Information Warfare**“. The essays should mention the writer’s vision over the current status and the future of the issue, the situation in Ukraine as an example and a critical position over the conflict. We received 6 essays (all from Portugal), but there is still no decision regarding the winner.



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The third day of celebration was also very important because we launched our first *Newsletter*. The EB used this tool to share within our framework of action what has been going on over the last months, since we were elected in Brussels, but also the calendar, upcoming activities, chapters' activities, cooperation with ATA, the usage of social media and the creative new initiatives to strengthen the YATA network.

We esteemed to have had over 250 people reading our newsletter (according to the website data). We are very glad to note that today, through the transparency of our actions and the information we share openly about all aspects of our work, we have supported the preservation and extension of the Atlantic Community. By doing so, we honour the vision of so many great atlanticists who saw that the security of both sides of the Atlantic is inextricable tied because we share the same values of freedom, peace and democracy.



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Day 4 was reserved for the official appearance of our largest institutional partner, ATA. We had the pleasure of sharing an official communication from ATA Secretary-General, Mr. Jason Wiseman, with a strong and relevant message to all listeners, emphasizing the importance of young security professionals for the future of the Alliance. The video has 59 views.



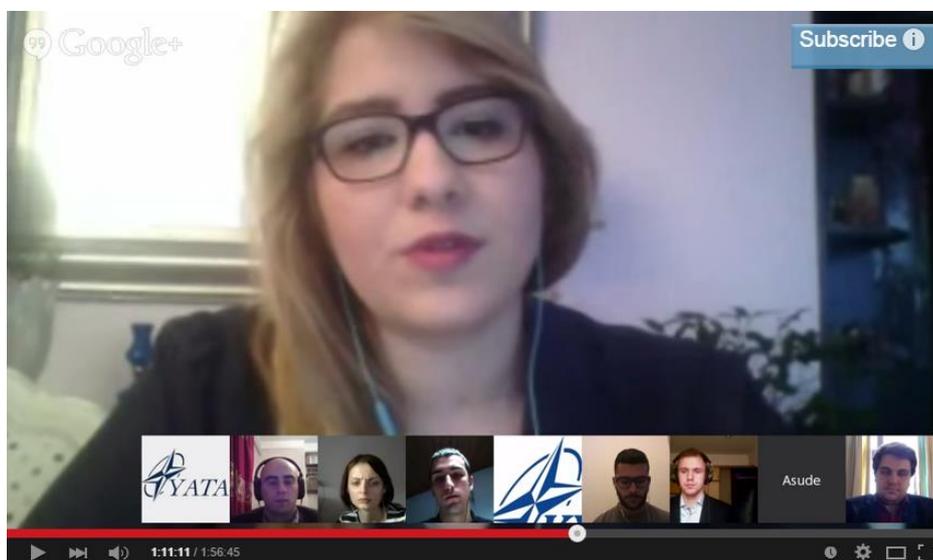
Friday 3rd of April, **Day 5** of our event, was marked by the most interactive activity – YATA Quiz. **The structure of the Quiz was simple:** 28 questions (28 NATO Members); 14 about NATO (Foundation, Member countries, Key Events, Basic Points (Political and Military Alliance, Collective Defence, Transatlantic Link, Strategy Concept), NATO Activities (Decisions and Consultations, Operations and Missions, Partnerships, Developing means to respond to threats), Working Structures (NPG,NAC, Military Committee, IMCS, Sec-Gen); and 14 about ATA and YATA – Foundation, Member Countries, Key Events, Executive Board Members (current and former), International Calendar. We recently announced the winner of this competition - **Giorgi Gelashvili from Georgia**. He will now claim his prize: a YATA-NATO Pack composed by several items. We also want to congratulate all of the participants who entered the competition; we had a total of 118 entries (68% from Georgia).

YATA NATO Week Quiz		
Ranking		
1	giorgi gelashvili	571,335
2	archil menteshashvili	570,731
3	Kire Babanoski	568,214
4	Seafarer	565,454
5	amil	564,687
6	Dato Naroushvili	562,760

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Last but not least, on Saturday 4th of April, anniversary of the Alliance, we started our journey sharing the official NATO video created for the occasion. After that, we dedicated all our efforts to the most challenging initiative of the week – the **Google Hangout**. By using this online forum, YATA Secretary-General Blaz Brilj managed discussions all evening (2 hours discussion) with 10 participants from different countries about the importance of NATO in their own perspectives, the events their chapters hosted during the week, as well as other topics related to the future of the Alliance.

The official video of the Meeting is still available on Youtube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fPJ-mtLEN6c>), and has 161 views so far.



Last but not least, we finished the activities with a message directly from Montenegro, where YATA VP Robert Shushich reported about the activities in his home country and made a short comment over the progress of the activities on the international level.



YATA Chapters events (alphabetical order)

YATA Azerbaijan

YATA Azerbaijan organized an event about Security with the contribution of several experts (20.04). "In which direction should Azerbaijan be in the backdrop of the intensifying conflict between Russia and the West? Which kind of perspectives are expected from Iran-West approach towards the region?" - was the topic under discussion in the event: a tremendously suggestive title and another excellent example of how important and fruitful YATA events can be in the discussing of the most prominent issues in the current International Agenda.



YATA Estonia

The third *NATO&EU Roundtable* (in Tallinn) brought together more than 50 participants from 24 countries. In 2015, the Roundtable focused on Ukraine crisis, cyber defence and upcoming security challenges. During 3 days the participants had the chance to listen to esteemed experts, practioners and be involved in heated debates on security threats our Alliance is facing.



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YATA Georgia

In the framework of YATA NATO Week 2015, the International Black Sea University hosted on the 4th of April, the final session of the "Farewell Address of NATO Secretary General" competition organised by YATA Georgia. All participants were awarded certificates and prizes kindly provided by the Romanian Embassy in Tbilisi. And the first, second and third place winners were selected by specially appointed jury panel.



YATA Italy

Our colleagues from the Club Atlantico Giovanile del Friuli-Venezia Giulia couldn't miss the opportunity to join YATA International in celebrating the Alliance and organized a late event on the 21st of April entitled "*Dal Patto Atlantico alla NATO del Terzo Millennio*".



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YATA Kosovo

KYATA organized a lecture as part of their NATO week activities, provided by Major Serge Stroobants at Centre for the University Studies, Ministria për Forcën e Sigurisë së Kosovës - FSK-FSK, TRADOC, on the topic: "Comparing NATO and EU Enlargement and neighborhood policies, Art 10 of the Washington Treaty and the open door policy and partnerships". Kosovo Youth Atlantic Treaty Association (YATA Kosova), on 8th of April, also organized a round table called "Empowering the Role of Women in the security sector". Finally, from 12-14 April, a *NATO Council Simulation* was held in Kosovo.



YATA Macedonia

NATO Week was celebrated in Macedonia with a traditional press conference organized by the Euro Atlantic Council of Macedonia on 03.04.2015 (Friday) in the Army Hall, Skopje.



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YATA Montenegro

Day-long celebration of NATO Founding Day has started with planting of 29 seedlings at Gorica Hill, out of which 28 symbolize NATO member states, and the 29th seedling represented Montenegro as the future NATO member state. Citizens from different segments of society, Members of Parliament of Montenegro, high officials of the state as well as persons from diplomatic core participated in seedlings planting.

Central segment of NATO Day started at 12pm at the Republic Square and attracted a large number of visitors of all generations. The event started with a helicopter jump of two parachutists from the aero club “Špiro Mugoša” who wore both Montenegrin and NATO flags. Visitors enjoyed a performance of the Montenegrin Military Orchestra and music band Beer&Steel as well as in parade of young majorettes from “Alisa“ dance club. Beside this entertainment part, at the stand of the Atlantic Council of Montenegro and also through the talks with representatives of the Membership Council's Communication Team, interested visitors had the opportunity to get the information on advantages and disadvantages of joining NATO. Army and Police of Montenegro, as well as the Emergency and Rescue Service of Capital Podgorica presented their equipment and skills. At the stands of NATO member state embassies, citizens could get the information on their culture and tourist offer while national tourist offer was presented at the stand of the National Tourist Organization.

The third segment of NATO Day celebration was panel discussion named “Future we believe in”, which was held at KIC “Budo Tomović”. Speakers at the panel were Miško Rađenović, tourist expert, Mina Raičević, manager of the Montenegro Business Alliance and Vanja Vuković from the Association of Humanist Women of Montenegro called “Montenegrin Woman”. Afterwards, there was organized an official cocktail as a closing part of the celebration of NATO Day.



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YATA Portugal

AJPA/CPA, together with Euro-Atlantic Diplomacy Association of Portugal, organized a conference in Lisbon Wednesday 8th of April, aiming to continuously promote constructive and objective debate about the Alliance and its priorities. The event was attended by more than 75 participants.



YATA Slovakia

YATA Slovakia held a discussion on challenges for the Alliance ahead and the NATO missions and also a documentary screening “Operation Allied Protector - NATO and Gulf of Aden Mission”, which triggered further debate on Somali piracy in the Gulf of Aden, today considered one of the greatest security threats in the region. The Youth Team of the Slovak Atlantic Commission also organised a discussion on the official development assistance of the Slovak Republic (ODA SR) in Kenya and South Sudan and the team had a pleasure of welcoming Mrs Nina Macháčová, project manager as a guest speaker, at Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica. This activity's main objective is to bridge the gap between defence and its transatlantic dimension and the Public. All activities aimed to help Slovak citizens to understand better both the beneficial impact of defence in their day-to-day lives as well as limitations and possible implications of defence and military technological developments. Furthermore, it was also aimed to increase military’s awareness of issues and subjects that are of concern to the public.



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YATA Slovenia

YATA Slovenia helped organizing the Round table: "Peace and Security in Europe and its Neighborhood", in Ljubljana, on the 30th of April. Speakers at the panel included some important figures, such as His Excellency Brent R. Hartley, US. Ambassador to Slovenia; Shannon Quinn, Spokesperson for the U.S. Mission to NATO in Brussels; Anton Bebler, President of Euro-Atlantic Council of Slovenia; and political commentators Mirko Cigler and Boris Čibej.



YATA Spain

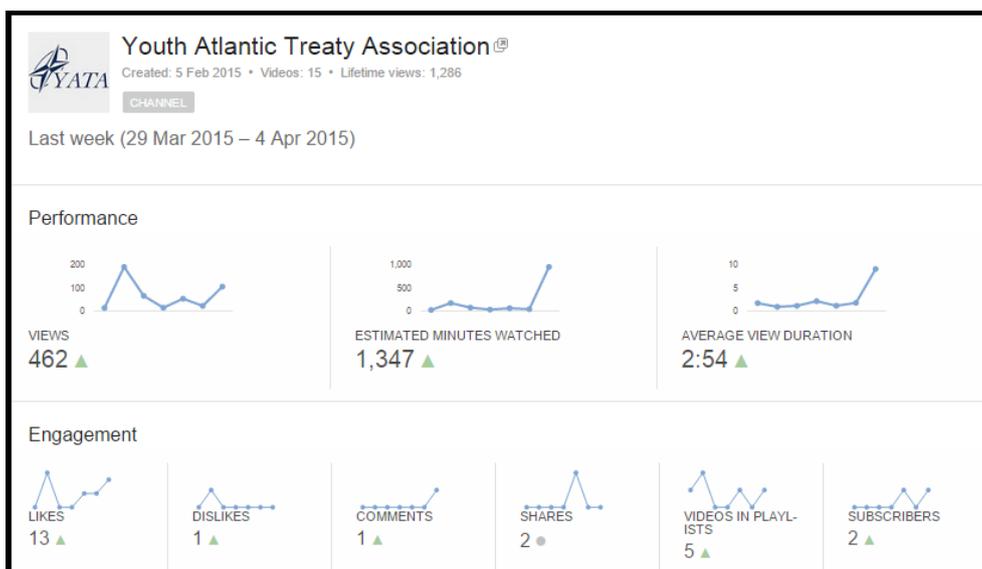
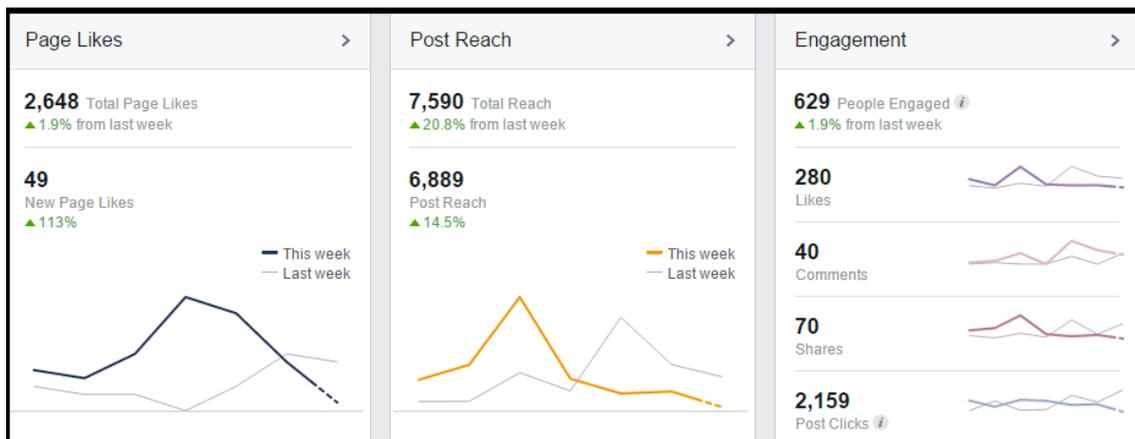
COAJE organized, together with San Pablo CEU University and ATA Spain, the First "Course on National Security and Armed Forces" in the Faculty of Law. A conference lasting for 6 hours consisting on oral expositions by young soldiers (Corporals, second lieutenants, captains) and technicians, as well as NATO representatives, who explained what the Armed Forces are, how they work, the career opportunities they offer, why some young people decide to serve their countries and some of the most remarkable missions in which the Spanish Armed Forces have participated.



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Social Media

During “YATA NATO Week”, YATA International was very active on the social media. Our NATO Week campaign is clear to have caused a substantial impact in our entire network. The engagement from our followers was tremendously important for the success of this initiative, especially on Facebook (1). On a related note, 3 months ago, YATA EB decided to create a new Twitter Account (2). Tweets can be delivered to followers in real time and we consider this tool as a very important and effective way to engage more people into our activities. During YATA NATO Week, Twitter was used every single day and the results couldn't be better. As we mentioned previously, LinkedIn was ‘the weakest link’ of our social media tools. Even the recently created Youtube Channel (3) had some impressive and unexpected numbers.



Conclusion

In conclusion, it is worth repeating and emphasizing how important it was for YATA EB come up with this idea first discussed when we were elected, last December in Brussels.

The components contributing to the success of such initiative are easily identified: a strong network of young students and professionals, dedicated and capable of promoting Atlanticism and to further the transatlantic link within the framework of YATA.

We feel that we cannot generalize about how successful all events were. It depends of course on the situation and motivation of the team and people involved, and the level of enthusiasm they have for learning; yet we must emphasize that the feedback was very positive, which leaves us thinking that this activity can be repeated in the upcoming years.

Still, it was not all a *fairy tale*. It is important to note that the various time constraints were a serious obstacle, always present when planning this week. In addition, we would like to have had the participation of more chapters – not only organizing national events but also participating in the international contests and Google Hangout.

Failing to secure financial support was another setback, but we must seek to correct what went wrong internally before starting to find excuses not to have achieved total success on this event.

At the next opportunity, we must bear in mind the need to respect deadlines, so we could present YATA to their possible sponsors as a united and indivisible association. We should also ensure that all our activities and plans are challenging, exciting, and, above all, constitutive of an added value to everyone attending it.

So, in conclusion, we hope that this activity has come to stay. It would be a shame to work so hard on something that would last only one year. There is plenty of room for improvement and the way forward can only bring good things for everyone.